

An Outline Communications Strategy for RPA

1.0 **Scope of paper**

1.1 This paper sets out a communications strategy to support the implementation of the RPA programme. It is intended to provide corporate direction and facilitate the development of individual communications plans at departmental and programme level.

2.0 **Communications aim and objectives**

2.1 The overall aim of the strategy is to:

- Support the reform programme through timely and interactive internal and external communications that creates an understanding of and commitment to the reform programme.

2.2 The following objectives have been established:

- Engage all key internal and external audiences impacted by RPA.
- Ensure that internal and external stakeholders understand the vision, timetables and key activities, who it affects and what it means for them.
- Exploit innovative and existing communications channels and techniques to maximise awareness of and understanding of the reform programme.
- Establish by July 2006 a public sector communications sub-group to ensure an integrated and consistent approach to communications across the public sector.

- Monitor the development of communications structures in the new organisations to ensure they support a corporate approach to communications.

3.0 **Message delivery – leadership**

- 3.1 The Review of Public Administration represents the largest change programme ever undertaken in the public sector in Northern Ireland. Communication activities must focus on demonstrating the value of RPA in terms of improved public services and, internally, must deal with staff concerns.
- 3.2 An integrated communication strategy requires strong leadership to ensure the consistent delivery of communication activities. The RPA steering committee provides leadership for the overall programme. To ensure a consistent approach to communications across the wider public sector a communications sub-group should be established under the leadership of the Executive Information Service, with representatives from each sector of the RPA programme. The role of the group will be to co-ordinate communication activities, ensure a consistent approach across the public sector, promote best practice, identify any communications gaps and provide feedback to the steering group.
- 3.3 Each department must have a communications champion who will be visible and provide leadership to managers so that relevant information is delivered in a timely and consistent manner to staff and other key stakeholders.
- 3.4 A key to the successful delivery of the communications strategy will be an understanding of what the target audience wants to hear. In the case of staff, the communication activities must answer the “What about me?” question. How will the reform affect or benefit me? To facilitate this, communications must deliver simple, explicit and easily understood messages about the reform of public administration in Northern Ireland.

Stakeholder	Information Requirements	Mechanisms	Responsibility
<p>Secretary of State/ Ministers</p> <p>Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - civil servants - Health staff - Education staff - Local government staff - Other <p>PSC</p> <p>Trade Unions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of legislative programme • Progress reports on implementation • Political/public opinion on implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable for implementation • Impact on jobs • Impact on the role of their organisation • HR issues • Sources for advice/information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable for implementation • Recruitment/impact on jobs • HR issues • Consultation with staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timetable for implementation • Impact on jobs • HR issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submissions and briefings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted messages relevant to each sector • Line managers • Emails • Team briefing • Q&A • News letters/staff magazines • Websites • Roadshows <p>Meetings/briefings</p> <p>Meetings/briefings</p>	<p>HOCS/RPA team</p> <p>Communications teams within each sector</p> <p>RPA team Permanent Secretaries</p> <p>RPA team Personnel Directors</p>

Stakeholder	Information Requirements	Mechanisms	Responsibility
Political representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress with legislation • Boundary issues • Roles and responsibilities of new bodies • Impact on local jobs and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings • Bulletins • Websites • Media 	Ministers RPA team Permanent Secretaries
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on local services • Location and access to new services • Timetable for changes • Jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • PR • Websites 	RPA communications team/ EIS
Private sector/trade organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on cost of government • Opportunities for business • Implementation timetable • Location issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings • Media • Websites 	RPA communications teams
Professional organisations, eg doctors, nurses, teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation timetable • New management arrangements • Impact on jobs • HR issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings • Media • Websites • Staff bulletins 	RPA communications teams

Stakeholder	Information Requirements	Mechanisms	Responsibility
<p>Media</p> <p>Voluntary/Community Sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation timetable • New structures/boundaries • Impact on jobs • New arrangements – access to services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation timetable • Impact on existing services provided by this sector • Location and organisation of new structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements • Briefings • Websites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcements • Seminars • Briefings • Websites 	<p>EIS/Communications teams</p> <p>Communications teams</p>